



Illinois Families Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Teens get help with life skills, jobs and housing

Terrifying and terrific are both words that could be used to describe the teen years. Youth and the adults taking care of them may be anxious about the road ahead and, yet, at the same time can enjoy the journey. For youth who have been in foster care, the path can sometimes be especially rocky. The trauma of being apart from family and having been exposed to abuse or neglect could easily knock a young person off course. However, compassionate and dedicated adults can play a major role in steering teens toward a brighter future as they come of age.



Mike Saudners (right) volunteered to help the Robinson brothers prepare for Prom Night. DCFS and The Image Studios sponsored a "Cinderella and Rockefeller" event last May that outfitted youth with formal wear and styling for their big night.

Many foster parents have a willingness to work with teens. Some caregivers seek out adolescent placements as their "calling." Even for those who don't, the reality is that young children will eventually become teenagers, so get ready. Love for kids is just the starting point. Parents need practical tools and effective resources to prepare youth (and themselves) for the journey toward adulthood. DCFS in recent years has put more resources in place to help with the transition. Foster parents can now turn to staff who specialize in helping adolescents.

"In response to the changing needs of our young people, DCFS has changed the services we can offer to help them reach their potential," said Cynthia Moreno, Deputy Director of the Division of Service Intervention.

Currently, of the approximately 17,000 youth in care, more than 7,500 are 13 years or older. The Division of Service Intervention has targeted several programs and resources to help youth prepare for life as they move toward adulthood. The Division's Office of Education and Transition

Services (OETS) is the first stop for many programs to assist with education, employment and life skills training opportunities to prepare youth for life as adults. Transition Coordinators from OETS are assigned to each DCFS region to help youth and caregivers navigate the programs available.

Life Skills Training

The Life Skills Program is designed to enhance a youth's independent living skills while promoting economic and social self-sufficiency.

Continued on page 3



New Acting Director

Erwin McEwen

In November, (after the last newsletter was in production) Bryan Samuels announced his resignation as Director of the Department of Children and Family Services.

"When you think about making a transition in leadership in child welfare, you have to do it at the right time for the children, and if I was going to hand off the reins, this was the right time to do it," Samuels told the Chicago Tribune.

As of November 17, Governor Blagojevich named Erwin McEwen, acting director. McEwen joined DCFS in 2003 as Deputy Director of Monitoring and Quality Assurance. He was responsible for overseeing the private agencies contracted to provide child welfare case management. McEwen's experience in agency administration at Lakeside Community Committee, and his tenure at DCFS give him a rounded perspective to handle this time of transition.

"I would like for all of us to continue to build a system that is responsive and accountable to the children and families we serve," said McEwen.

From the Editor:



Along with the new year, I am happy to present a new look for the newsletter. We freshened the page layout

and changed the typeface to make the entire publication more visually appealing. The other small but significant change is to move the Family for Me pictures of waiting children from the back cover to the last inside page. We will still spread the word that these youth are available for adoption, with more respect for their situation.

This issue also includes the annual reader survey on pages seven and eight. Please take a few minutes to let me know the types of stories that interest you most. I will do my best to respond in upcoming issues. Last year the topics that drew the most interest were:

- Free services and products for families
- Behavior management and discipline
- Accessing services and community resources after adoption
- Education, including post-high school, scholarships, tutoring and special education
- Rights, responsibilities and financial implications for adoptive and guardianship parents
- Self-esteem in youth
- Foster care rules and regulations

I addressed some of those topics in 2006 and will bring you others from your list this year.

I was grateful to hear so many comments on how useful the newsletter can be for your families. Still, there is always room for improvement. We publish every other month and I still have work to do to make sure the mailings are timely. This year I will be working with our computer team to be certain families receive the correct regional edition for more local coverage. The six regional reporters are working hard to present news that is pertinent. Feel free to contact them about community programs and other story suggestions that could be helpful to families in your area.

You have trusted me with our newsletter. I say ours because after ten years as a foster and adoptive parent, some days I feel like an old veteran and other days like a fresh rookie. Needless to say, there will always be something to write about.

Best wishes to you this year and good luck to your families.

Vanessa James,
Editor

Help for teens, con't.

ciency. Youth learn about money management, nutrition planning and maintaining a household. Caseworkers begin with the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment to establish a baseline for what the young person knows and what life skills he or she still needs to learn. The youth, caregiver and caseworker work together to develop individualized transition plans, goals and timelines. Life skills training can consist of group and/or individual instruction, and may include hands-on training. Many community-based agencies work with young people to provide this training to youth ages 14-20 who are legally under DCFS care. Every young person under DCFS care is required to do life skills assessments at ages 14, 16 and 20. Caseworkers complete the referral packages for life skills classes. Contact OETS at 312-814-5959 for more information.

Employment Opportunities

DCFS has established relationships with many employers and job training programs to help youth gain valuable work experience. These programs can include internships, part-time employment and job readiness. The transition managers can offer employment advice, assist with applications and help teens identify job opportunities in many communities throughout the state.

Additionally, young people who have completed high school with a diploma or GED can apply to the Employment Incentive Program (EIP). It is designed to provide

financial and supplemental services to help adolescent youth gain marketable skills through on-the-job work experience or through job training programs. Under this program, young people who consistently sustain a job, receive a \$150.00 monthly stipend for a maximum of 12 months. Stipends end when youth reach age 21, if still in DCFS care. Funding is also available for initial

Office of Education and Transition Services

Chicago
312-814-5959

Peoria
309-693-5150

Springfield
217-557-2689

work-related items such as tools or special work clothing, based on need and limited to a one-time disbursement of up to \$200.00.

To be eligible, youth must be 17 to 20 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, and be under legal guardianship of DCFS. The applicant must be involved in a certified job training program or be working 20 hours a week for a month before applying. Youth who complete the EIP are equipped with the employment skills and work ethics to assist in their transition to independence.

Youth Housing Assistance Program

Establishing a household is an important step toward adulthood. DCFS may provide Youth Housing Assistance to help secure stable housing for youth currently in

care or who were under DCFS guardianship. Youth Housing Assistance includes *Housing Advocacy* and *Cash Assistance*. Housing advocacy services assist young people in obtaining and/or maintaining housing. It can also include: consumer education, budget counseling, linkages to community-based resources (i.e. assistance with utilities, clothing and food) and follow-up services for a minimum of three months after the young adult secures appropriate housing. Cash assistance will vary depending on the situation. Cash assistance may be authorized for the following reasons: housing security deposit, rent (limited circumstances) purchase of beds for the young person and their children, current utility bills or utility deposits, appliances, partial housing subsidy and other items required to avoid or manage a crisis.

The eligibility for housing assistance is very specific. In general, youth 17 and a half who are still in DCFS care, who aged out of DCFS or recently had their case closed are eligible for housing advocacy. Additionally, youth who were adopted or moved to guardianship after age 14 are also eligible. Cash assistance is only available after age 18 to youth currently in DCFS care, those preparing for case closure or those who aged out. In all cases, youth will have to demonstrate income and budget capabilities. Young people and their caregivers should work closely with the caseworker to determine if this is an appropriate program. The DCFS Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator is available by calling 312-814-5571.

DCFS offers help in the hunt for college financial aid

Getting into college can be tough, but paying for it brings another set of challenges. Students and parents can get help from DCFS as they make plans for moving on to higher education. The Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS) has assigned Transition Managers to each region, who can help sort out the educational options. DCFS Education Advisors in the regions are also available to assist families, including adoptive and guardianship families. To find the Transition Manager or Education Advisor in your area, contact OETS at 312-814-5959.

FAFSA financial aid

The first step in qualifying for financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA). All assistance based on financial need requires filling out the FAFSA. It is important that each youth complete and mail or e-mail their applications early in the calendar year, in order to secure the maximum benefits. Students can get forms from their school counselor or via the Internet.

For students who have been in the child welfare system, the major factor for financial aid is the student's status as "dependent" or "independent." The FAFSA will ask if the applicant is currently a ward of the court or if the applicant was a ward until age 18. Youth in foster care or guardianship, residential or independent living programs should answer YES. Youth who were adopted before age 18 must answer NO. A YES answer will consider the youth to

be an independent student, which means their parent's (birth parent or foster parent) income will not be included in the financial need formula. However, adoptive parents' income will be included, unless special circumstances apply. After filling out and returning the application, the student will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) that lists the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is what the family is expected to pay, based on their family income, on top of any financial aid that is awarded.

DCFS Scholarships Apply before March 31

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the Department or who have left Department guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities, a \$458 monthly stipend and a medical card up to age 23. The purpose of the program is to ensure that those selected have the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in four years or less. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are available now and due March 31. Award announcements occur by mid-May.



Deputy Director Cynthia Moreno congratulated the 2006 DCFS Scholarship recipients at their award luncheon.

Community College Tuition Assistance

DCFS will pay the tuition for youth in care who attend an Illinois community college when tuition cannot be fully covered through federal financial aid. Students must apply for financial aid first. DCFS youth are eligible to utilize four semesters of tuition payments. Community colleges can also provide other supportive services necessary to ensure a successful education experience for the student. Such services may include career selection, financial aid advising, placement services, and tutoring.

Youth in College/ Vocational Training Program

Youth still under the care of DCFS may choose to attend a vocational school, a four-year college or a community college, under the Youth in College/Vocational Training program. Benefits include a stipend of \$458 each month for up to four years and continuation of the medical card

until age 21. Book expenses that are not covered by financial aid can be reimbursed.

This program is open to youth at least 16 years old, but not older than 21. Students must maintain at least a "C" average each semester with a full-time schedule. They must submit grades at the end of each semester to receive the stipend. All students must apply for financial aid each year.

Education and Training Voucher

The Office of Education and Transition Services administers the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). The voucher is for an annual payment up to \$5,000 to fund educational expenses, tuition, room and board, books, and supplies not covered by financial aid.

To be eligible for the program, youth in care or formerly in care must be:

- 16–20 years old (youth 21 to 23 are also eligible if they were participating in a college or vocational program when they turned 21)
- Attending a public/private four-year university, junior college, or a one-year vocational training program (in or out of state)
- Youth who moved to adoption or guardianship after age 16 are eligible

Youth who meet the criteria should request and complete the Education and Training Voucher

Application and Agreement form with the ETV Academic Plan.

These Internet sites have information on selecting colleges, preparing the applications and financial aid. They can be valuable tools in helping students make decisions and secure resources for further education.

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid**
www.fafsa.ed.gov
- **IL Student Assistance Commission**
www.collegezone.org
- **College Board (SAT exam)**
www.collegeboard.org
- **ACT exam**
www.act.org
- **Fastweb scholarship search**
www.fastweb.com
- **The Smart Students Guide to Financial Aid**
www.finaid.org/scholarships
- **United Negro College Fund**
www.uncf.org
- **Broke Scholars Scholarships**
scholarships.brokescholar.com
- **Black Excel College Help Network**
www.BlackExcel.org
- **Princeton Review Scholarships & Aid**
www.princetonreview.com/college/finance
- **Minority Scholarships**
www.free-4u.com/minority.htm
- **Orphan Foundation**
www.orphan.org

Care packages for college students

There are hundreds of young people attending college, while still being part of the DCFS system. They are fulfilling their dreams, often without the support of family members, mentors or role models. The Care Package Program offers a range of volunteer and networking experiences for adults who want to lend a helping hand of support and encouragement to a youth moving into college out of foster care or group home living.

Volunteers can make the college experience more special in a few easy steps:

- Send a box of goodies (cookies, stationery, personal care products) every four months.
- Send a special care package around the holidays.
- Send a birthday card and gift.
- Send a special package during final exam week.
- Send a special note of congratulations on completing the semester or the year.

Students will acknowledge all gift packages to foster a meaningful exchange. Some relationships could include lunches on campus or a visit during the holiday break. DCFS will connect volunteers to students, based on mutual interests.

Caregivers who are interested in helping a young person in college can sign up to be a volunteer. Contact Roberta Valdes at 312-814-5013 or via e-mail at Roberta.Valdes@illinois.gov.

Register for 2007 Caregiver Institutes

The 2007 Caregiver Institutes, Building Families: Connecting Caregivers, Parents and Youth will be offered at nine locations around the state. The Institutes will offer vital information on understanding the connections youth have to their families of origin, supporting youth with a return home goal and maintaining connections that last. **Call the DCFS registration number at 877-800-3393.** The Caregiver Institutes are open to all DCFS and private agency foster, adoptive, guardianship and relative caregivers; however, space is limited. Call today for details.

- **February 10, Cook Region I**
DCFS Cook Central, Maywood
- **February 17, Cook Region II**
DCFS Cook South Regional Office
- **February 24, Central Region**
Bloomington, Eastland Suites
- **March 3, Southern Region**
Fairview Heights, Four Points Sheraton
- **March 10, Central Region**
Rock Island, Holiday Inn
- **March 24, Southern Region**
Rend Lake, Rend Lake Hotel and Conference Center
- **March 31, Central Region**
Charleston, Eastern Illinois University
- **April 7, Northern Region**
Rockford, Clocktower Resort
- **April 14, Northern Region**
Kankakee, Hilton Garden Inn

Families receive free tax help



It is time to gather the receipts and statements and get ready to do the taxes. Foster parents, adoptive par-

ents, and legal guardians can encounter an array of confusing rules and regulations relevant to changing family situations. More importantly, they may not realize that they can often qualify for many tax credits and deductions.

DCFS and the Center for Economic Progress offer the *Tax Booklet for Illinois Foster & Adoptive Parents*. The Tax Booklet clarifies rules and gives examples about a variety of credits, dependency issues, and qualifying children definitions.

- The Uniform Definition of Child affects many parents of foster and adopted children. One aspect of the law is that foster children no longer have to live in the home for all 12 months of the year to be claimed as dependents.
- A significant benefit for families who adopt is the Adoption Tax Credit. The credit could be up to \$10,960 (an increase this year) for each adopted child with special needs. Any unused portion of the credit can even be carried forward five tax years.
- Taxpayers who receive an adoption subsidy can use the tax credit to exclude income,

and potentially pay less taxes. This applies even if there were no actual expenses associated with the adoption. This benefit phases out at higher income levels.

These topics and many others are covered in detail in the easy-to-follow booklet. You will also find various tools and resources, such as free instruction books, phone numbers, and web sites relevant to tax issues faced by foster and adoptive parents. The booklet will be mailed to homes in January.

To further assist families in 2007, the Center for Economic Progress, through its Tax Counseling Project, will serve 36 Illinois communities. These tax preparation sites will be in 15 Chicago communities, 6 Northern Illinois communities, and 15 Downstate communities. Most sites will be open as of January 27, 2007. To qualify for free tax preparation services, family income must be less than \$40,000.

The Tax Booklet is a valuable tool that can save you money at tax time through your own return preparation or by sharing it with your tax preparer. If you do not receive a booklet, request one at taxtraining@centerforprogress.org or by calling 312-252-0280. To find out about a free tax preparation site near you, refer to your Tax Booklet, visit www.centerforprogress.org, or call 312-630-0273 within the Chicago area or 888-827-8511 outside Chicago or 312-701-1326 for our TTY line.

2007 Reader Survey

Please help us make sure Families Now and Forever offers what you want to know. After circling your answers on **both** sides, simply fold, seal and mail the survey back. Or visit the DCFS web site at www.state.il.us/dcf to fill it out on-line. You may also fax both sides to 312-814-4131. Thank you in advance for your input.

CIRCLE: 1=GREAT interest 2=SOME interest 3=NO interest X=NOT applicable

Working Within the Child Welfare System

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 2 3 X Foster care rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X Child and family teams |
| 1 2 3 X Adoption rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X Confidentiality |
| 1 2 3 X Guardianship rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X System of care service network |
| 1 2 3 X Governmental rules/legislation | 1 2 3 X Integrated assessments |
| 1 2 3 X Licensing policy | 1 2 3 X Intake/child investigation process |
| 1 2 3 X Obligations of foster parents | 1 2 3 X Juvenile Court |
| 1 2 3 X Recruiting foster/adopt families | 1 2 3 X Resolving DCFS/agency disputes |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Adoption and Guardianship

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 2 3 X Financial implications | 1 2 3 X Subsidy agreement |
| 1 2 3 X Advocating for the adopted child | 1 2 3 X Rights and responsibilities |
| 1 2 3 X Obtaining community resources | 1 2 3 X Accessing free post-adopt services |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Medical and Mental Health

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 2 3 X Depression | 1 2 3 X Developmental disabilities |
| 1 2 3 X Attachment disorders | 1 2 3 X Medically-fragile children |
| 1 2 3 X Eating disorders | 1 2 3 X Sexual abuse |
| 1 2 3 X Self-esteem | 1 2 3 X Resources for medical specialties |
| 1 2 3 X Fetal alcohol/drug exposure | 1 2 3 X Resources/info for dental services |
| 1 2 3 X Asthma | 1 2 3 X Resources for mental health |
| 1 2 3 X Diabetes | 1 2 3 X Using the Public Aid medical card |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Education

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 2 3 X Working with schools/teachers | 1 2 3 X Tutoring |
| 1 2 3 X Special education services | 1 2 3 X DCFS Education Advocates |
| 1 2 3 X Scholarships | 1 2 3 X Education after high school |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Age-related Topics

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 2 3 X Early childhood intervention | 1 2 3 X Independent Living |
| 1 2 3 X Tantrums, biting, aggression | 1 2 3 X Services for teens |
| 1 2 3 X Safety (home, playground, school) | 1 2 3 X Housing for transitioning teens |
| 1 2 3 X Pre-teen sexuality | 1 2 3 X Youth Advisory Boards |
| 1 2 3 X Teen sexuality | 1 2 3 X Runaways |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Family Life

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 2 3 X Behavior management/discipline | 1 2 3 X Foster/adoptive family networking |
| 1 2 3 X Sibling rivalry | 1 2 3 X Family traditions/activities |
| 1 2 3 X Impact of placement changes | 1 2 3 X Camps |
| 1 2 3 X Handling stress | 1 2 3 X Arts, music, sports activities |
| 1 2 3 X Family therapy/counseling | 1 2 3 X Travel |
| 1 2 3 X Self-care for parents | 1 2 3 X Free services, products |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Tell us how you feel about the regular features currently offered in each issue:

CIRCLE: 1=GREAT interest 2=SOME interest 3=NO interest X=NOT applicable

Regular Features

1	2	3	X	Director's Message	1	2	3	X	Family for Me photos of children
1	2	3	X	Foster/adoptive parent profiles	1	2	3	X	Regional edition insert
1	2	3	X	Tell It Like It Is question/answer	1	2	3	X	Training schedule

other topics/comments: _____

Fold here _____

Vanessa James, Editor
Families Now and Forever
IL Department of Children and Family Services
James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60601

Fold here _____

Please tell us about yourself:

_____ # foster children currently in your home	_____ private agency supervised home
_____ # children you have adopted	_____ DCFS office supervised home
_____ # foster children previously in your home	_____ relative caregiver (yes / no)
_____ # children you have taken guardianship of	_____ DCFS/agency staff (yes / no)

Circle your DCFS region: Cook Central Cook North Cook South Southern Northern Central

Would you be interested in receiving the newsletter by e-mail? Yes No

Would you be interested in reviewing the newsletter on the DCFS website? Yes No

What do you like **best** about the newsletter? _____

What do you like **least** about the newsletter? _____

Other comments: _____

Please offer your Name, Address and Phone Number, if you wish.

McEwen discusses placement procedures with advisory councils

On November 17, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council met together in Chicago. The meeting was especially timely since that morning news of Bryan Samuels' departure had been announced. On top of that, Erwin McEwen was already on the agenda, and he had just been named the acting director. McEwen stood in front of the councils, where just a few years ago he was a member at the table, representing a private agency on the foster care advisory council.

After assuring the councils that the progress made so far would continue, McEwen focused his comments on a new method for placing children in foster homes as they first come into care. DCFS is piloting a new protocol that looks for a foster home closest to the school children attend, when possible. The emotional impact of being removed from their parents' home, no matter how necessary, is significant and traumatic to children. The goal of the placement protocol is to minimize

further disruptions in their education and to keep them connected to familiar surroundings and family members while in care.

The new system began by taking an inventory of licensed homes and mapping them to the school districts across the state. Licensing representatives also identified which homes were actually available for new placements. Of the many licensed foster homes, slightly less than 3,000 are currently available to take children.

In the timeframe between July and September of 2005, a child was placed an average of 20 miles from his original home. With the new program, during the same period in 2006, the distance decreased 12 miles, down to 7.8 miles. The median distance was just 2.5 miles. Acknowledging positive aspects of the plan, council members raised safety concerns from having a child remain in close proximity of a potentially harmful parents or dangerous neighborhoods. McEwen said that staying in the same school ideally or remaining closer to home was just the first step in identifying possible foster home options. Caseworkers should take safety and clinical concerns into account as they select the appropriate available home.

Another concern was the timeframe agencies have to accept a placement and find a foster home. Agencies will have 60 minutes to determine if they can place a child with a family in their foster care



Acting DCFS Director Erwin McEwen met with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council on his first day in his new position.

program or the case will move to the next agency on the list. Foster parents should be certain their agencies have up-to-date contact information and alternate phone numbers. Furthermore, only foster homes that are included in the list of available homes will come up as possible options when a child comes into care. The agencies confirm this list regularly with DCFS. Foster parents who wish to be considered for new placements should keep in contact with their licensing representatives.

The Illinois Adoption Council next meets February 2 in Bloomington at the Eastland Suites Hotel. The meeting begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is February 23 at the Ramada Inn in Springfield. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. Contact the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 for more information.



The foster care and adoption advisory councils observed a demonstration of the new software for placing youth according to their school district provided by Richard Foltz.

Tell It Like It Is—Readers Respond

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the real deal on caring for children from those who know best...YOU!

Editor's Note: Even though my foster kids were "old enough to know better," I had to move the knife block off the counter after their home version of a *Pirates of the Caribbean* sword fight.

The new question is: *What safety changes have you made in your home that you might not have thought of before foster care?*

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at vanessa.james@illinois.gov or by phone at 312-814-6824. Reader surveys said the *Tell It Like It Is* feature was a favorite. Keep it coming by sending in your response today.

Add your parent group to the 2007 listing

If you lead a support group or association for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the support group listing coming in May. Please send the following information by March 1.

- Name of group
- Meeting schedule (with date and time, e.g. 2nd Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.)
- Contact name with phone and/or e-mail
- Any other notes (e.g. potluck dinner, child care provided, etc.)

New listings and updates should be sent in writing to Vanessa James by e-mail or by post.

vanessa.james@illinois.gov

Vanessa Scott James

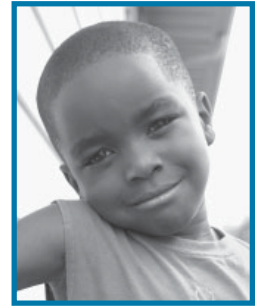
DCFS

100 W. Randolph, Suite 6-200

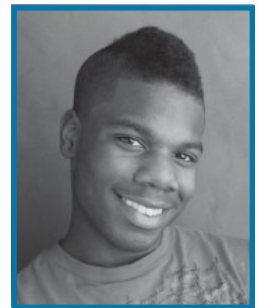
Chicago, IL 60601



Erica [7567]



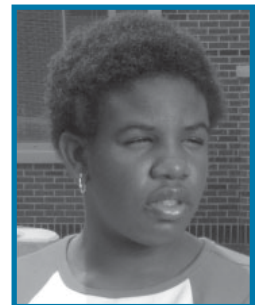
Denzel [7559]



Lewis [7536]



Jaionbre [7429]



Vicky [7019]

A family for me

Erica [7567] Erica, 13, is a friendly young lady who may be a little shy at first, but really loves to socialize. She enjoys helping younger children, and among her friends, she is a positive influence who helps resolve conflicts. After school, Erica enjoys cheerleading and participating in social clubs.

Her worker said Erica loves pets, including the new puppies in her foster home. She likes to dress nicely and is very talented at doing people's hair. Erica is ready to join an adoptive family. The family for Erica would be kind and supportive. She said her ideal family would be "cuddly, fair, and respectful."

Denzel [7559] Denzel, 7, is a warm and friendly young man. He has a gift for creative expression, both verbally and through artwork. When he's not socializing or sitting at the drawing table, Denzel likes to play basketball. His energetic nature and love of competition help him succeed at all kinds of athletic activities.

His worker said Denzel is curious and likes to take the initiative to do things on his own. His teachers and foster parents said Denzel is

a talented artist and very caring. Parents for Denzel would, provide helpful boundaries and limits, while being loving and supportive.

Lewis [7536] Lewis, 16, is a kind young man with many friends at school and in his neighborhood. He demonstrates great loyalty to them and is always willing to lend a hand when they need help. Lewis also enjoys working with animals. He has volunteered at the local humane society and hopes to join a family that has pets. When Lewis has free time, he likes to listen to hip-hop music and songs by Mariah Carey. His worker said Lewis is very respectful and he enjoys helping out with chores at home. Lewis would like to have sisters and other family members with whom he can share his feelings. He would like to maintain contact with his biological sister after he is adopted.

Jaiombre [7429] Jaiombre, 8, is a lovable young man who enjoys music and dancing. He has a real talent for memorizing song lyrics and likes to sing along with his favorite songs. When Jaiombre has one-on-one time with his foster parent, he likes to visit

amusement parks and carnivals to go on the rides. He also enjoys watching movies and listening to stories. His foster parent and teachers both said that Jaiombre can be very sweet and adorable. His worker said he enjoys individual attention. The family for Jaiombre can be patient and loving, and should provide a stable home environment. You can ensure that Jaiombre receives the learning supports and regular medical check-ups that will help him to thrive.

Vicky [7019] Vicky, 16, is an energetic young lady who likes to keep busy. Her favorite activities include going to the swimming pool and shopping at the mall. In quieter moments, she enjoys taking long walks and going on scenic car rides.

Her worker said Vicky is energetic and can be helpful when others need a hand. Potential parents for Vicky would provide lots of love and supervision. You can have experience with children who have special needs.



If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.



***Illinois Families
Now and Forever***

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

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Graphics: Jenny Florent

Printing: DCFS Print Shop

Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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Department of Children and Family Services©

Illinois Families Now and Forever

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Chicago, Illinois 60601

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